

WORDS OF WISDOM!

Written for YEPA members by a top competitor, respected breeder and APA-ABA licensed poultry judge. **Thank you Anthony Ashley!**

Show **CONDITION, CONDITION, CONDITION!**

I have been told by several people that my birds are always in good condition. So, I thought I would share some of my methods you. I know that some of you do not need any help, but some of you do! Conditioning of a bird starts before the egg is laid. You should be feeding a good quality feed and giving your breeders fresh water. This will promote healthy chicks. If they hatch healthy then keep them healthy with a good starter grower, fresh water daily and a good dry environment. When I move my birds to the ground pens after they have feathered out enough, I put frontline on them and worm them. From then on I worm my birds at least one time per quarter, and apply the frontline every 6 months. This will hopefully prevent any stress that might fall on the bird, due to external and internal parasites. During the really dry months I will dip or spray my birds with water to keep the feathers from drying out, at least once or twice a month. They have a starter/pellet mix before them at all times. Eventually I will wean them off of the starter and they will get pellets only. I feed soaked grains (oats or wheat) usually in the evening. I will add some liquid vitamins to the soaked grains usually twice a week. The soaked grains add moisture to their body during the hot months, and help out with feather growth. And do not forget to keep fresh water before the birds at all times. When I notice a young bird showing potential I put a band on it. As it matures if I notice it is shaping up even more to be a showbird, I pen it separately or with only one or two others. All of my birds I show from week to week are individually penned. This will limit the chance of feather damage from picking/ fighting from the other birds.

Before I show a bird, I make sure it is finished out completely and does not have any visible flaws to the plumage. Also if the body of the bird is not filled out I will not show it. To get the bird ready for show, I wash it 5 days before the show. This allows the natural oils to get back into the feather. I wash my birds with a mild dish-washing liquid and if I have a soiled white bird I wash it in Tide with Bleach Alternative. If I go to a show on Friday, I will wipe the birds down with a damp wash cloth before putting them in the show coop, to remove the dust from transport. Also have your feed and water in the coop before putting the bird in the coop. This will keep the bird from consuming too many shavings. Saturday morning I clean the head and feet of the bird and apply head dressing to the birds head. I also use an oil hair spray and a polishing cloth and wipe the bird's feathers down (Dark birds only) to clean off any dust and to enhance the sheen of the bird. After that it is up to the bird if it is going to show or not.

Now I know my birds are not perfect. And I am far from the best breeder. But I will not show a bird with broke feathers or that has poor body conditioning. These 2 things will discourage a judge from picking your bird more than any other. I hope that this helps some of you out there show better looking birds. I have seen some outstanding birds at the shows this year and past years that were not in the best of condition. I just thought what potential the bird has and to be in such bad condition, it is a shame. There are 2 quotes that I would like to share with you all from 2 of the best poultry breeders of their time. I think of these 2 quotes these gentlemen shared with me, every time I am selecting birds for show.

Never show a bird that will embarrass you. –Harold Finley

Never show a good bird and let it get beat. (Because it is in poor condition) –Jim Wallace